

Welsh Probate Records

Kori Robbins, AG®

British Isles Research Specialist — Family History Library
Kori.Robbins@FamilySearch.org

WHAT ARE PROBATE RECORDS AND WHY SHOULD I USE THEM?

Probate records are court records dealing with the distribution of a person's property after death. Information recorded in probate records may include:

- Death date
- Names of heirs
- Family members and guardians
- Relationships
- Residences
- Inventories of the estate (including trade and household goods)
- Names of witnesses

Who Could Leave a Will?

- Middle and upper classes
- Males with property
 - Before 1882 a wife who died before her husband could not make a will except with her husband's consent or under a marriage settlement created before her marriage
- Widows and single women
- Before 1750 heirs often did not prove wills

Limitations

- The eldest son might be omitted because he received his inheritance according to law.
- Any others who already received their inheritances might not be mentioned.
- The spouse mentioned might not be the parent of children named in the will.
- Relationships mentioned might be inaccurate.

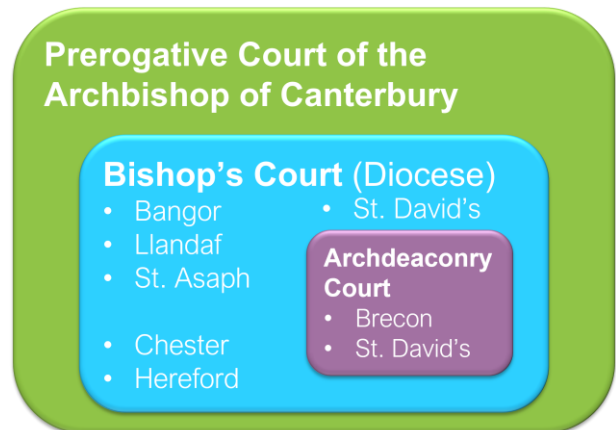
FINDING PROBATE RECORDS BEFORE 1858

Before 1858, wills were probated in an ecclesiastical court with jurisdiction over where the property was located. If the person had property in more than one jurisdiction, a higher court had jurisdiction. The jurisdictions of the courts were based on the Church of England's hierarchal order.

- The **Prerogative Court of Canterbury** (PCC) was the highest court. This court was used if the deceased had property in more than one diocese.
- Bishops' courts were the highest local courts. In Wales there were four main bishops' courts: **Bangor**, **Llandaf**, **St. Asaph**, and **St. David's**. A small area in Flintshire and

Denbighshire was under the jurisdiction of the Bishops' Court of **Chester** in England. Parts of Monmouth, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire were under the jurisdiction of the Bishops' Court of **Hereford** in England.

- Archdeaconry courts were divisions of a diocese. The only archdeaconries which handled probate were in the diocese of St. David's: **Brecon** and **St. David's**.



For the counties and which courts had jurisdictions in them, please see the FamilySearch Research Wiki under "Wales Probate Records, Pre-1858 Probate Courts."

Online Indexes and Images

- National Library of Wales, 1543-1858 **Resources > Wills** (<https://www.library.wales/discover/library-resources/wills>)
- *Index only:* Findmypast.com **Search > All record sets** "Wales Probate Records 1544-1858"
- Prerogative Court of Canterbury
 - Ancestry.com **Search > Card Catalog** "England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858"
 - The National Archives (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858>)

FINDING PROBATE RECORDS AFTER 1858

The Principal Probate Registry was created by the government in 1858. Even if your ancestor died before 1858, you may want to check these records. There are cases where the probate process took much longer than usual. The process is the same as for England. See the FamilySearch Research Wiki "Wales Probate Records" under "Post-1857 Probate Courts."

Online Indexes and Images

Indexes are available on

- FamilySearch.org 1858-1957
- Ancestry.com 1858-1995
- Findmypast.com 1858-2019

Images of wills

- FamilySearch.org 1858-1925
- Wills after 1925, www.gov.uk/search-will-probate